

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Q2 2024-25 NDIS Quarterly Report to Disability Ministers - NDIS Participants

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000001

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

1. According to the most recent Census of 2022, 5.5 million Australians had disability. While some of these Australian may not be eligible for the NDIS due to their age or other factors, this figure indicates there is a significant disparity between the number of people with disability in Australia in 2022 (5.5 million) and current NDIS participants (680,123). What are the reasons for this disparity?

Answer:

1. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) determines eligibility based on a person's impairments, not their disability or diagnosis. For a person to be eligible for the NDIS under the disability requirements the NDIA must have evidence showing:

- The disability is caused by an impairment.
- The impairment is likely to be permanent.
- The permanent impairment means the person has a substantially reduced functional capacity to do one or more daily life activities. These activities include moving around, communicating, socialising, learning, or undertaking self-care or self-management tasks.
- The permanent impairment affects the person's ability to work, study or take part in social life.
- The person will likely need National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports for their whole life.

As the impact of some conditions can vary, each NDIS access request must be assessed on the person's individual circumstances. NDIA staff look at the person's whole life and consider how the person's impairments affect their functional capacity. Staff will consider the evidence provided by the person about their impairment/s and assess this against the NDIS eligibility criteria.

NDIA staff utilise Our Guideline – Applying to the NDIS to make consistent, evidence-based decisions about eligibility under the *National Disability Insurance Act 2013*. This guideline is published on the NDIS website at [ndis.gov.au/about-us/operational-guidelines](https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/operational-guidelines).

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIS Office and Shopfronts

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000002

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

2. How many NDIA offices and shopfronts are there in Australia?

i. Please provide a breakdown by level of remoteness according to the Modified Monash Model.

Answer:

2. As at 17 February 2025, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) holds a total of 150 properties across Australia.

i. Please see below the breakdown of NDIA offices and shopfronts:

- 132 Service Delivery shopfronts
- 9 properties which include both Service Delivery and Corporate accommodation
- 9 Corporate only properties.

The NDIA does not categorise properties using the Modified Monash Model. The Agency's offices and shopfronts are listed on the NDIS website at [ndis.gov.au/contact/locations](https://www.ndis.gov.au/contact/locations)

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA Rural and Remote Strategy 2016-2019

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000003

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

- 3.a. Is the Rural and Remote Strategy 2016-19 still being used by the NDIA, in recognition that people with disability in rural and remote Australia might require additional support?
- b. Does the agency plan to introduce an updated version of the strategy and/or an implementation plan? If so, what is the timeframe and process for this?

Answer:

3.a. The Rural and Remote Strategy 2016–2019 (the Strategy) detailed how the NDIA will work with communities, governments and local service providers to deliver the NDIS in rural and remote areas. As the NDIS has progressed from trial to transition to full Scheme there have been numerous learnings gained. These learnings have resulted in establishing an ongoing business model.

b. The Strategy informed the development of a dedicated servicing model for Australians living in areas where there are no Partners in the Community or Early Childhood partners. The NDIA's current Remote Service Delivery Framework provides guidance that is aligned in principle to the intent of the Strategy, and provides a substantially stronger operational approach and resourcing to ensure that people with disability in non-partnered Australia have access to the full range of NDIS supports.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy 2024-2028

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-0000004

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

4. a. What feedback has been received following the release of the Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy 2024–2028?

Answer:

4. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) continues to work with the External Advisory Group established to support the co-design of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy 2024–2028 (the Strategy).

Since the release of the Strategy in April 2024, the External Advisory Group has provided feedback on the following topics:

- Draft definition of cultural safety
- Frontline staff capability
- Mid-year progress report on the Strategy from the NDIA

Members have also continued to provide feedback to the Agency on the experience of the Scheme for people with disability from CALD communities, and the issues they face including:

- Access to appropriate translation services
- Information in languages other than English
- Barriers to NDIS access and plan implementation – particularly for people with disability who may be new migrants.

More generally the NDIA has heard from stakeholders, participants, families and carers through our ongoing community engagement activities the following themes of feedback on the Strategy:

- CALD communities need information in languages other than English and alternative formats such as audio and Easy Read. Feedback from the community noted that while translations of the Strategy and Action Plan were well received, more NDIA information should be translated into multiple languages, including participant plans.

- Community members and stakeholders would like to see improved access to, and quality of, interpreter services. Language and literacy barriers continue to limit access disability services and supports.
- Advocates have raised lack of trust with government services as a key barrier to people with disability from CALD communities accessing support through the NDIS.
- Importance of transparent reporting on progress against the Strategy from the Agency.
- CALD stakeholders want to ensure they are involved in and understand impacts of reforms to the NDIS.
- Advocates want to make sure participants from CALD communities understand their rights and are protected from poor provider practices, abuse and exploitation.
- The CALD community need more information about the role of the NDIS supports in building independence and capacity.
- Multicultural community organisations are struggling to keep up with NDIS and Aged Care information as reforms are happening at the same time.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA First Nations Strategy 2025-2030

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000005

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

5.a. What feedback has been received following the release of the First Nations Strategy 2025-2030?

b. What is the process and timeframe for developing and publishing the associated the Implementation Plan?

Answer:

5.a. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) First Nations Strategy 2025-2030 (the Strategy) reviews all feedback on the Strategy as it is received. To date, informal feedback received from government stakeholders, First Nations non-government organisations and First Nations NDIS participants has been received. This feedback indicated that the Strategy has been acknowledged as an important step for the NDIA to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and respond to the findings of the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review. Constructive feedback received has focussed on ensuring the NDIA implements the Strategy, including in partnership with the First Nations disability sector and in alignment with concurrent policies and programs.

b. The NDIA is planning to co-design the Strategy Implementation Plan during 2025 with the First Nations disability sector, including with government and non-government stakeholders, and through a program of nation-wide community meetings. The Implementation Plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework will outline key NDIA actions, accountabilities, timelines, performance measures, and reporting requirements. These documents are due to be finalised by late 2025.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIS eligibility process

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000006

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

7. a. Please advise what work is being done, if any, to simplify the NDIS application process to assist applicants in rural, regional and remote communities.
- b. Is there a plan to update the access forms and supporting evidence requirements? If so, please provide details.
- c. How will the introduction of navigators support participants in rural, regional and remote communities?

Answer:

7.a. As part of the Remote Service Delivery Framework (the Framework), the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is working with both participants and communities to support better access to the Scheme and with Agency supports.

Part of the work occurring under the Framework from the Remote Community Connectors (RCC) and the local community connectors specifically supports access requests in rural and remote Australia. This includes the access process and the gathering of evidence, along with community education and information sharing initiatives. These initiatives include local expo events as well as scheduled travel and co-servicing with Services Australia (which supports identity checks); and facilitating local access clinics in locations where additional support to access the Scheme is needed.

The NDIA has also established a dedicated team to review access requests from people living in remote and very remote areas. This team is staffed with people who understand the types of information and evidence that are, and are not, readily available to people living outside our cities. This means the evidence can be considered in context and access decisions made more quickly.

The Agency is in the process of testing the use of a Trusted Referee Statement (TRS) as evidence of identity, particularly for communities where government documentation is hard to access. This process was successful when utilised during the Fitzroy Crossing and Maningrida access clinics.

b. The NDIA is currently working with participants, the disability sector and community organisations representing people with disability to consider what information is needed to determine if someone meets the NDIS eligibility criteria to access the Scheme. Our aim is to improve consistency and equity in outcomes, consistent with the requirements set out in the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*.

The Independent Review of the NDIS made recommendations about opportunities to improve participants' experience of the NDIS including, a better understanding of the evidence needed to support decisions about a person's eligibility for the NDIS, including the introduction of a new Access Request Form and Supporting Evidence Form.

The NDIA is considering these recommendations as part of the broader work program. To ensure people with disability are at the centre of improving the NDIS through scheme reform and co-design, the NDIA will work directly with people with disability to develop the new approach for access eligibility.

c. The Agency is currently co-designing the potential Navigator role, including preliminary design work. The design work includes exploring how the Navigator role can better support participants in rural, regional and remote communities.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA staff - First Nations

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000007

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

10. a. The NDIA's Annual Report 2023-2024 notes that 9.9 per cent of participants are First Nations people and that, according to the 2024 APS Census, 3 per cent of NDIA staff identified as First Nations people (p. 129).

i. What initiatives does the NDIA have in place to attract and retain staff from First Nations backgrounds?

ii. What initiatives does the NDIA have in place to increase the percentage of staff from First Nations backgrounds?

Answer:

10.a. The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is committed to the employment and retention of First Nations peoples. This commitment to engage and retain First Nations peoples is articulated in the NDIA First Nations Employment and Inclusion Plan 2022–25.

i-ii. Initiatives that the Agency employs include:

- Cultural and National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) leave that acknowledge the cultural needs of First Nations peoples which are included in the Agency's Enterprise Agreement.
- Staff working at the NDIA who identify as First Nations are supported through a First Nations Employee Network (FNEN). The FNEN provides a place to yarn, connect with others, share experiences as employees and support each other. It currently has a membership of over 220 staff.
- Affirmative Measures recruitment practices are used to fill some roles, including in the Agency's First Nations group.
- The Agency has a dedicated First Nations Champion and a First Nations Allyship Champion whose role is to advocate on behalf of First Nations staff, promote awareness of First Nations matters, guide Agency strategy activities and direction, and generally raise the profile and influence of First Nations peoples and community. The Champions support and meet regularly with the FNEN.

- The Agency's Reconciliation Action Plan supports attraction and retention of First Nations staff to the NDIA.
- The NDIA actively seeks First Nations peoples to participate in its Graduate Program and has a long-standing commitment to participation in Services Australia's Indigenous Apprenticeship Program (IAP) as a key mechanism for increasing the percentage of First Nations peoples coming to work at the Agency. The NDIA has participated in entry level programs like IAP since 2015, and in that time has employed over 80 First Nations peoples, with a retention rate of just over 78%. In 2024, the Agency employed its largest cohort of First Nations peoples with 22 new starters gaining employment at the NDIA.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA staff - Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000008

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

11. a. In the 2024 APS Census, 24% of NDIA staff identified as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background. The NDIS CALD Strategy 2024-2028 includes a goal to ‘support employment opportunities for people from CALD backgrounds (including those with disability) at the NDIA to improve representation at all levels.’ Please provide an update on actions taken towards this goal.

Answer:

11. The Agency’s NDIA Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Inclusion Plan 2024–27 (Inclusion Plan) was launched in June 2024 and continues until September 2027. This is the Agency’s first CALD Inclusion Plan which can be found on the National Disability Insurance Scheme website at ndis.gov.au/about-us/careers-ndia/inclusion-and-diversity

The Agency has already completed the following deliverables under the Inclusion Plan:

- Refreshed existing mandatory multicultural training to ensure the content reflects best practice CALD inclusion.
- Provided staff with additional resources to understand the cultural background of CALD staff.
- Provided leaders with additional resources to help them better support CALD staff.
- Provided targeted cultural sensitivity training to relevant staff.
- Developed a cultural heritage and religious dates of significance calendar.
- Conducted an awareness campaign for our CALD staff network to increase engagement and encourage staff to join the network, and introduced an informal buddy system through the network that links CALD staff across the Agency for informal networking and support. As at February 2025, the network has 363 members.
- Confirmed that our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider has appropriate capability and capacity to support CALD staff.

The Action Plan includes additional initiatives underway or planned for delivery over the next 2 years, including:

- implementing and maintaining a recruitment target for CALD staff at executive and senior levels
- improving our CALD recruitment approach to elevate the Agency's presence in the CALD community as an employer of choice
- encouraging CALD candidates to disclose their heritage for recruitment data collection explaining why the information is being collected
- reviewing our recruitment processes to identify and remove any potential barriers to inclusive recruitment for CALD applicants.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA Remote Community Connectors

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000009

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

- 13.a. When was the Remote Community Connector initiative established?
- b. What is the role of Remote Community Connectors?
- c. How many Remote Community Connectors are employed by the NDIA and which communities do they support?
- d. What training and supports are provided to Remote Community Connectors to help them fulfil their role?
- e. What factors are considered by the NDIA when engaging Remote Community Connectors, for example, language and cultural knowledge?
- f. What is the plan for the Remote Community Connector program going forward and is there a plan to expand the program? If so, please provide details.

Answer:

- 13.a. The Remote Community Connectors (RCC) program commenced in 2017 as a discrete pilot program to provide a cultural connection between remote communities and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).
- b. RCC roles are place based positions which cover approximately 480 First Nations communities. They have a critical role in connecting First Nations participants with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). They function as a conduit between the NDIA and their communities to aid communication, connection and engagement with the NDIS.
- c. The NDIA funds RCC roles through contracts with local First Nations organisations across the country. The RCC program funds 104 positions across 480 communities.
- d. RCC receive onboarding training, which includes an overview of the NDIS, their role, and how they can support participants and their community. They also receive on-the-job support from the NDIA locally, and are supported through employment in a place-based First Nations organisation.
- e. The NDIA contracts RCC program through local Aboriginal organisations; those organisations identify and employ individual RCCs. Our contracts require employees to be local, ideally First Nations people, from the communities they service.

f. The NDIA is in the process of expanding the RCC program. Later this year, the Agency will conduct a limited tender process that will expand the program to provide equitable coverage to all First Nations communities in Modified Monash Model (MMM)6 and MMM7 Australia. The process will standardise contract costing across the country, linking funding to award wages and provide participants with an equitable service no matter where they live. The process will also recognise that many RCC partners provide servicing beyond the baseline required in contracts that have a significant positive impact on participant access, servicing and safety. The new contracts will financially recognise these additional services, in addition to the ongoing baseline requirements.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA Local Area Coordinators

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000010

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

14. a. How many Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are employed by the NDIA in RRR communities?
b. How many LACs are based in remote communities?
c. What training and supports are provided to LACs to do their role in RRR communities?

Answer:

14 a-c. Local Area Coordinators (LAC) are part of the Partner in the Community model. LAC are not directly employed by the NDIA but are instead contracted via their partner agency.

There are no LAC or Partners in the Community in Remote or Very Remote locations. Instead, the NDIA directly services these areas as part of the Remote Service Delivery Framework, which applies in all areas where there is no Partner in the Community.

The LAC type functions in remote areas are delivered by the NDIA remote servicing team, the Remote Community Connector model and funded support coordination.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE
National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: NDIA Planners

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000011

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

15. a. How many NDIS planners are employed by the NDIA?
- b. Where are the NDIS planners located?
- c. What training and supports are provided to NDIS planners to do their role in RRR communities?
- d. What flexibility do NDIS Planners have in performing their role, for example, can they meet participants close to or at their home if requested?

Answer:

15.a. As at 31 January 2025, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has 3,328 employees in a Planner position.

b. The Agency Planner workforce is spread across 137 locations nationally.

c. All National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Planners have access to a range of training and support available, this includes:

- Upon commencement, all NDIA and Partner staff who undertake planning and planning-related duties complete Frontline Essentials. This is designed to develop the capability and confidence of new staff to enable them to develop participant plans.
- All NDIA staff have access to the Disability Navigator, an online resource that builds understanding of disability. This online resource promotes a supportive culture through improved staff awareness.
- The Continuous Improvement Connect program (CI Connect) is designed to further develop Service Delivery staff capability to deliver a sustainable NDIS and achieve the best outcomes for participants.
- The NDIA Technical Advice and Practice Improvement Branch (TAPIB) is staffed by subject matter experts with specialist health, allied health and technical expertise in various disability and health related fields. TAPIB provides individualised and group-based support and advisory services to NDIA planners, to assist them to understand and navigate decisions that relate to a participant's neurodegenerative or complex health or disability presentation.

In addition, all NDIS Planners in our remote servicing teams undertake an additional suite of cultural capability, local briefing and on-country cultural induction training, additional Work Health and Safety training, including 4-wheel drive and remote first aid training. Ongoing professional development and responsive training are delivered through a national coordination network and communities of practice.

d. Planning meetings can be delivered in a variety of methods including face to face, by phone, or virtual meetings. Participant and staff safety is paramount. With the proper risk assessments in place, planning meetings can occur in a participant's home or designated community setting (such as a supported independent living facility, justice setting). When a Planner or a Partner receives a request to conduct a planning meeting in a participant's home, they must complete a 'Participant home visit risk screening' questionnaire. This ensures risks are identified, assessed and managed to meet the safety and security requirements for delivering services at a participant's home for both the participant and NDIA staff.

The NDIA provides guidance to staff and partners about booking and conducting planning meetings. This includes supporting participants to communicate in their preferred method in all interactions with the NDIA.

Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

National Disability Insurance Agency

Topic: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Strategy 2024-2028

Question reference number: NDIA IQ25-000012

Question asked by: Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 19 February 2025

Question:

16. a. What feedback has the NDIA received regarding the NDIS CALD Strategy 2024-2028 since it was published in April 2024?

Answer:

16. Please refer to IQ25-000004.